

DOD resumes anthrax shots

by Gerry J. Gilmore American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled Jan. 7 that the Defense Department could again legally administer anthrax immunizations to service members.

Military commanders "should immediately resume the anthrax vaccination program," wrote Dr. David S.C. Chu, DOD personnel chief, in a department-wide memorandum.

The department's anthrax vaccine immunization program had been suspended since Dec. 23, after an injunction granted the previous day by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia caused DOD to suspend the program.

The department "remains convinced that the AVIP complies with all legal requirements, and there is now no judicial restraint" on administration of the vaccine, Dr. Chu wrote.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers maintain the anthrax vaccine is a safe and necessary prophylactic for U.S. service members deployed in the war against terrorism where enemies may employ biological, chemical or nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

Both Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers have received anthrax shots.



A Petty Officer 2nd Class with Marine Central Command, Djibouti, sprays camouflage utilities with pesticide. To have your utilities sprayed to help prevent mosquito bites, you can either call 824-2503, or e-mail MarksTL@hoa.centcom.mil. (Photo by Spc. Eric M. McKeeby)

New Relief Act Provisions Protect Service Members

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — A new law replacing the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act (SSCRA) of 1940 will provide military personnel — especially those deployed or called to active duty — greater protections to handle their personal financial and legal obligations, Defense Department officials said here.

President Bush signed the Service Members' Civil Relief Act (SCRA) into law Dec. 19.

"The focus of the SCRA is the same as under the SSCRA: to provide protections to service members who have difficulty meeting their personal financial and legal obligations because of their military service," said Air Force Lt. Col. Patrick Lindemann, deputy director for legal policy in DoD's Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

"The SCRA is a significant law, because it clarifies and updates the provisions that existed in the SSCRA, while adding some additional protections," he said.

"Service members on long-term deployments or called to active duty should not have to worry about their families in their absence being evicted from their quarters without sufficient legal protections," he continued, "or that they are paying on a leased car or apartment that they can't use, or about civil legal

proceedings they can't attend because of their deployment.

"These are some of the situations the SCRA covers so that service members are able to devote their energies to the military mission and the defense needs of the nation, and not on civil matters waiting for them at home," he added.

What Lindemann called "a significant change" added in the SCRA is an automatic 90-day stay of civil proceedings upon application by the service member. This applies to all judicial and administrative hearings. In the past, according to Lindemann, stays were discretionary with the courts.

The SCRA also makes it clear that the 6 percent limitation on interest rates for pre-service debts requires a reduction in monthly payments, and that any interest in excess of 6 percent is forgiven, not deferred, Lindemann said.

The SCRA also expanded the protection against eviction. Under the SSCRA, service members and their dependents who entered into a lease for \$1,200 or less could not be evicted without a court order. The SCRA increased that maximum lease amount to \$2,400 and added an annual adjustment for inflation. For 2004, the maximum will be \$2,465. Lindemann said this will significantly increase the number of service members entitled to this protection.

The SCRA also gives the service member who has received permanent change of station (PCS) orders or who is being deployed for not less than 90 days the right to terminate a housing lease with 30 days' written notice. Prior to the SCRA, service members could be required to pay for housing they were unable to occupy.

One of the more significant provisions in the SCRA that did not exist in the SSCRA, Lindemann said, was an added protection for service members who have motor vehicle leases. Any active-duty service member who has received PCS orders outside the continental United States, or who is being deployed for not less than 180 days, may terminate a motor vehicle lease. The law prohibits early termination charges. "Now, service members won't have to pay monthly lease payments for a car they can't use," said Lindemann.

"Service members may not always realize all the protections they have under the law," Lindemann said. "If service members have questions about the SCRA or the protections that they may be entitled to, they should contact their unit judge advocate or installation legal assistance officer for further assistance."

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